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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 0506
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0643
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 PESHAWAR 000435

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: FATA AND NWFP: BI-WEEKLY INCIDENTS OF TALIBANIZATION: AUGUST 1-15

REF: A) Peshawar 428, B) Peshawar 422

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REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

Introduction:

¶1. (C) Increased violence and intense fighting in Swat, Kurram and Bajaur characterized the first two weeks of August. Operations in Swat continue although the military's primary focus appears to have shifted to Bajaur. The government aggressively attacked militants in Bajaur, where air bombardment of militant positions continues. There are conflicting reports of the number of militants killed, ranging from 215 to 500. There also unconfirmed reports that the leader of Tehrik-i Taliban in Bajaur, Faqir Mohammad, was killed in the bombing campaign

¶2. (C) Near daily Sunni-Shi'a violence in Kurram agency has reportedly claimed between 139 to 200 lives. There is steady anecdotal reporting of critical shortages of food and medicine, due to longstanding taliban control of the primary road access from the Northwest Frontier Province into Kurram and the Shi'a capital of Parachinar.

¶3. (C) Militant attacks in the Peshawar area, including a suicide attack at a hospital; a remote-controlled roadside bomb that killed 11 Air Force personnel and several civilians; five days of open fighting between criminal/militant gangs and police in a southern suburb; and the bombing of an electricity tower disrupting the power supply to the city, have kept parts of the city on edge. The attack on the electricity tower angered local residents who are already weary of electricity load-shedding that can last up to 19 hours per day in some areas.

¶4. (C) Anxious about the influx of foreign and local militants from the military operations in neighboring Bajaur, a jirga in lower Dir formed a Lashkar to repel the militants while a jirga in upper Dir said they would take up arms if the militants entered their area. A Lashkar of 200 men recently formed in Buner killed six militants on August 15 in retaliation against the killing of policemen the previous week.

Swat: Military Operations Grind On

15. (C) The following is a timeline of significant events in Swat valley according to local press and post contacts through August 15:

August 1: Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan demanded that the Swat operation end or suicide attacks would be launched throughout the country.

August 5: Militants killed a police inspector and four policemen, burned a girls' primary school, middle school and high school.

August 10: Militants killed two, including a forest officer, blew up a bridge, and abducted dozens of villagers.

August 11: Militants kidnapped about 100 villagers and demanded a ransom for their release.

August 12: Security forces destroyed the homes of two militant commanders and arrested a key militant. Five militants and six civilians were killed in the fighting. Militants destroyed two bridges and a girls' school.

August 13-15: Militants continued to blow up bridges 15 km north of Mingora and destroyed three more girls' schools.

NWFP

16. (SBU) The following incidents have occurred in the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) and settled areas of the NWFP:

August 2, Lower Dir: Militants fired more than a half-dozen

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rockets at district headquarters from a nearby hilltop.

August 5, Mardan: TTP reportedly accepted responsibility for firing up to 10 rockets at a security post in retaliation for the government's attacks in Swat, injuring a soldier and a civilian. Militants also blew up four CD shops.

August 5, Buner: Militants opened fire at a security post, killing a policeman and injuring another.

August 5-10, Peshawar: Days of clashes between militants and police began 30 km south of the city when militants killed two policemen. The police later arrested five militants and a local Nazim for patronizing area criminal gangs. When their comrades demanded the militants be released, the police refused and launched a flag-march to establish a security presence in the area. Militants then ambushed the flag-march. Police called-in the Army to back them up. Militants responded to the Army attacks with heavy weapons, including RPG-7 shoulder-launched rockets, medium and heavy caliber machine guns, and small arms fire for three consecutive nights, blowing up a police checkpoint. More than 14 militants were later arrested. At least four civilians were killed, six injured, and hundreds of families forced to move from the area.

August 7-15, Peshawar: One of the 314 towers supplying electricity to 70% of Peshawar and to 2.3 million homes in the NWFP was blown up. Consulate sources attributed the attack to a growing periphery of criminal gangs surrounding Taliban hard-corps because both share a common purpose in undermining the government. Power outages lasting for up to 19 hours a day caused residents of Peshawar to spend sleepless nights without fans, lights, or water. Multiple consulate sources stated that this kind of terrorism was rapidly turning the public against the militants, whether or not they were, strictly-speaking, "Taliban."

August 8, Buner: Tehrik-i-Taliban claimed responsibility for

killing eight policemen in retaliation for government attacks in Swat. 30 militants riding in several vehicles reportedly pulled-up to a police post, three of them entered the station dressed in burqas stating they wanted to make a report. The militants reportedly took the policemen's weapons, tied their hands, stood them in line, and executed them.

August 8, Buner: Eight police were killed when militants attacked a police checkpost.

August 9, Peshawar: Militants fired rockets into a neighborhood, killing two and injuring six.

August 9, Hangu: Militants killed an alleged flour smuggler.

August 9, Kohat: Consulate sources in Kohat stated that the government is not in control of the area and the residents live in constant fear. Militants reportedly killed three men in Darra Adamkhel.

August 9, Hangu: Militants dumped the body of a recently kidnapped banker.

August 10, Kohat: Militants fired three rockets and damaged a Kohat Airbase, near Darra Adamkhel.

August 10, Mardan: Militants blew up two CD shops.

August 10, Kohat: Militants reportedly distributed pamphlets in Darra Adamkhel warning immoral people to repent. The pamphlets stated that until security forces were withdrawn from the area, no elder would go to the political office and the Khasadar Force would not be allowed to perform its policing duties.

August 11, Peshawar: One person was killed and two others were injured when a time-bomb went off in a 20-year-old boy's hands in front of a private hospital, after security guards stopped him.

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August 12, Buner: Militants blew up a CD shop near a bus station.

August 12, Peshawar: 13 people, including eleven Pakistan Air Force (PAF) airmen were killed and 18 injured 13 when a remote-controlled roadside bomb with 40 kg of explosives targeted a PAF vehicle. Militants also blew up an abandoned police post. The new Amir of Tehrik Taliban, Hafiz Gul Bahadar, made his first statement demanding an immediate halt to the military operation in Bajaur. Taliban spokesman Maulvi Umar declared "open war."

FATA

17. (SBU) The following is a roundup of incidents of Talibanization in the FATA's tribal agencies and frontier regions:

August 1-15, Bajaur: Intense fighting escalated after several dozen militants besieged a strategic post and then ambushed the security forces sent in to reinforce them. Air strikes then attacked suspected militant positions throughout the agency. Reports estimate 100,000 to 300,000 residents have fled to neighboring districts, and there are reports that militants forced some locals to stay behind as "human shields." Consulate contacts state that the Bajaur operation is the most aggressive operation the Pakistani security forces have launched to date. Current estimates of militant casualties are between 215 and 1500. Senior al-Qaeda leader Abu Saeed al-Masri was reportedly killed during one of the air strikes, as was the leader of the TTP in Bajaur, Faqir Mohammad. There has been no confirmation of these claims. (Note: See Peshawar 428. End Note.)

August 1, Dargai: Militants blew up an NGO office for rural support programs.

August 3-15, Kurram: Sectarian clashes broke out on August 3 and have reportedly killed 139 to 200. Parachinar has been cut off from Pakistan for 10 months, causing serious shortages of food and medicine. (Note: Fighting between Shi'as and Sunnis has been recurrent since 1943. There were serious outbreaks of violence in spring 2007 and fall 2007.)

August 3, Khyber: Consulate contacts report that militants warned the people of Zingara village not to work with American projects and kidnapped two people.

August 4, South Waziristan: A new militant group calling itself "Taliban Ittehad" announced that it had retaliated against a U.S. air-strike by attacking several army bunkers and an army base at Wana, wounding one soldier.

August 5, Bajaur: Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP) deputy Maulana Faqir Mohammad and spokesman Maulvi Omar threatened to launch its cadre of suicide bombers in Pakistan's major cities if the government did not stop its attacks in Swat. At the same press conference, the TTP also threatened Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) chief Altaf Hussain and demanded that he "immediately end his kingdom in Karachi," saying that the Taliban could take control of Karachi anytime.

August 6, Khyber: Consulate contacts report that militants visited a development project in Jamrud to "monitor" the activity there.

August 7, Khyber: Militants attacked trucks parked at the Torkham border carrying supplies for NATO forces in Afghanistan, damaging 17 containers and injuring four.

August 9, Khyber: The struggle for control of Khyber Agency between two militant groups continued as Lashkar-i-Islam and Ansar-ul Islam resumed clashes in Tirah valley after an almost two week lull, killing five and injuring eight.

August 9, Khyber: Mangal Bagh's ex-driver was found beheaded with a note accusing him of being a "US spy."

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August 10, Khyber: Militants reportedly warned the approximately 100 gas station owners in FATA not to allow subsidized fuel to be smuggled into Afghanistan or to sell fuel supplied by multinational oil companies, demanding that they sell only oil supplied by Pakistan State Oil (PSO). Militants reportedly believe that the fuel is used by NATO jets to kill Pakistanis.

August 12, Khyber: Consulate contacts report that militants are embedded along the roads leading into Landikotal and have established "effective control" over the area.

August 11, Mohmand: Militants blew up a checkpoint vacated by paramilitary troops a few days earlier, blew up a government office, and kidnapped two.

August 11, South Waziristan: Militants killed a tribal elder who supported the government. Tribesmen blocked a key road leading out of Waziristan to protest the killing.

Government Response

18. (SBU) This is a summary of government responses to "creeping Talibanization" according to press and consulate contacts:

August 1, Kurram: Frontier Corps stopped militants from entering Pakistan from Afghanistan and seized a cache of arms, ammunition and explosives.

August 4, Lower Dir: The Lower Dir District Counsel condemned the attack on a nearby Bajaur Levies post and demanded the NWFP

government assign a new DCO.

August 5, Buner: The district government convened a peace jirga, making invitations over loudspeakers in district mosques.

August 5, Kohat: The first group of 50 policemen, of 450, arrived at the headquarters of IX division of the Pakistan Army, Kohat, for the first phase of a five-week commando course to combat terrorism in the region.

August 5-10, Peshawar: For the first time, military helicopters attacked militants inside the district.

August 10, Malakand: Security forces arrested four suspected militants during a search operation near Batkhela.

August 10, Peshawar: All parties of the NWFP ruling coalition announced they would tackle insurgency in the tribal areas by force, if necessary, to establish the writ of the government.

August 11, Kurram: Tribal elders requested that the government destroy madrassas involved in militant training and called for arresting all those involved in subversive activities.

August 13, Peshawar: The government offered amnesty to local militants in the Adezai village on the assurance of good conduct and giving up armed struggle.

August 13, Hangu: Paramilitary forces arrested seven militants and seized heavy arms.

August 13, Buner: Police traced a vehicle used in an attack several days earlier back to a militant hideout. About 35 militants shot at a pursuing helicopter and ran away into the hills.

August 13, South Waziristan: Multiple reports stated that a US missile launched from a drone killed at least 12 militants 30 km from Wana.

Grass Roots Efforts to Halt Talibanization

19. (SBU) The following events are examples of activities taken by local communities to halt the spread of Talibanization:

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August 1, Hangu: A grand jirga began negotiating a peace deal between militants and the provincial government, including the release of captives.

August 1, Lower Dir: A grand peace jirga vowed to crush those propagating talibanization and hatred in their district.

August 5, South Waziristan: Tribal elders established a "Lashkar" after ordering three tribesmen be fined and that their homes be destroyed for sheltering "anti-Wazir" elements, meaning Uzbeks.

August 5, Swat: A member of the Central General Council of the ANP said that militants in Swat were "enemies of Islam," because they were destroying schools, hospitals, bridges, roads and government properties, along with kidnapping and killing the innocent.

August 6, South Waziristan: A local association demanded that the NWFP government move the site of a planned Cadet College, 36 km from Wana, to a more secure location.

August 8, Peshawar: Elders of the Ashokhel tribe have demanded the safe recovery of 25 FC personnel held hostage by militants in Swat valley.

August 9, Swat: Local people reportedly opened fire on militants passing through the Malam Jaba area, previously the

only ski resort in Pakistan, until militants destroyed it last month.

August 10, Buner: A jirga announced they would ban the entry of Taliban or security forces.

August 13, Buner: Locals killed six militants.

August 13, Khyber: Taliban leader Haji Namdar was killed at a mosque while praying.

August 15, Buner: A Lashkar of 200 men killed six militants in retaliation against the killing of policemen the previous week.
TRACY